DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 337 556 UD 028 321

AUTHOR Chambers, George A.; And Others
TITLE Funding Interventions for Students at Risk. School Finance Series.
INSTITUTION North Central Regional Educational Lab., Oak Brook, IL.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 91
CONTRACT OERI-40-86-0004
NOTE 46p.
AVAILABLE FROM North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1900 Spring Road, Suite 300, Oak Brook, IL 60521 (Order Number: SF: 912, $6.00).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - General (020) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Compensatory Education; Definitions; Delivery Systems; Educational Equity (Finance); *Educational Finance; Educationally Disadvantaged; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Aid; *Financial Support; *High Risk Students; School Support; *State Aid; State Programs; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS North Central Regional Educational Laboratory; *United States (North Central)

ABSTRACT

Issues surrounding funding programs and services for at-risk students are discussed. The introduction and Section I, "Issues Related to Financing Programs and Services for Students at Risk" (Suzanne L. Juday) identify some of the problems that must be addressed to provide adequate at-risk programs and services in an efficient and equitable manner. Recognizing the academic and support service needs of the at-risk student is key. Policy issues relating to state and Federal funding are also discussed. Sections II-A and II-B, "Funding Programs for Student At Risk in the NCREL Region" and "North Central Region Definitions of "At Risk," provide data on at-risk program funding in the seven-state area of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) region and the definitions of "at-risk" in use in each state. Section II-A also presents profiles for the following states: (1) Illinois; (2) Indiana; (3) Iowa; (4) Michigan; (5) Minnesota; (6) Ohio; and (7) Wisconsin. Section III presents the following expert commentaries on financing issues: (1) "Principles and Problems for Equitable Financing of At-Risk Programs" (G. A. Chambers); (2) "Equitable and Effective Funding for At-Risk Children and Youth" (J. G. Cibulka); and (3) "Fiscal Issues Relating to Services for At-Risk Students in the Midwest" (J. G. Ward). (SLD)

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School Finance Series

Funding Interventions for Students at Risk

Written by:

George A. Chambers
James G. Cibulka
Suzanne Langston Juday
James Gordon Ward

Includes Executive Summary

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Published in 1991
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North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521
708/571-4700

This report is based on work completed in 1990 and sponsored wholly or in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, under Contract Number 40-86-0004. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department of Education, or any other agency in the U.S. Government.

NCREL Order Number: SF: 912, $6.00

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Executive Summary

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Assistant Professor
College of Education
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James G. Cibulka
Professor of Administrative Leadership and
Director of Doctoral Studies in Urban Education
School of Education
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

James Gordon Ward
Associate Dean of Education, and
Associate Professor of Educational Administration
and of Government and Public Affairs
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Introduction

Evaluating Education Finance Policy Decisions

Suzanne Langston Juday

State participation in financing public education began with the recognition that in virtually all states, state government has constitutional responsibilities regarding education. One outcome of this recognition was that a funding system should exist that provides students throughout a state the opportunity to receive some clearly defined educational services. Out of this philosophy came the "equalization formula" that reflected a set of values against which educational program availability and funding could be measured. These values are adequacy, equity, efficiency, and liberty.

Somehow, between the beginning of school finance as a concept and the present time, financing education came to be viewed as an issue separate from the provision of education services. The values and resulting criteria listed above were most often used to evaluate only the finance systems. Additionally, finance systems were frequently viewed very narrowly to include only the general state aid system and included funding for special programs only if they were part of "the formula." The focus of the evaluation was usually equity as defined by ability-to-pay measures. Thus, the adequacy of service delivery and fairness between funding for special education services and services for gifted and talented programs, for example, were not usually considered. Finally, the relationships between services and funding were not usually treated seriously and in-depth.

This set of papers apply these criteria more broadly in two ways. First, the criteria will be applied to financing at-risk programs and services. Secondly, these criteria will consider some of the programmatic issues related to at-risk intervention and not just the finance component. Before applying these criteria, the reader may find the following brief review helpful.

Adequacy

Adequacy is an appealing word that may communicate something intuitively, but its application frequently leads to serious substantive debate. Alternative terms are sufficient, appropriate, etc. The essence of the word may be summarized by the question, "How much is enough?" Applying this idea to educational programs and services themselves requires that policymakers be clear about the size of the populations to be served, for one facet of adequate programming is serving all of the identified population. A second facet has to do with the level of programming. It is possible, for example, to serve all multiply handicapped students by placing them in classes of 50 students with one teacher. Virtually no one, however, would argue that this level of service meets the needs of a multiply handicapped student. The difficult task is identifying what level of services does meet students' needs, i.e., what level of quality is sufficient. Ultimately, the values of each state and community expressed through the political system at the state and local levels will define the qualitative level of adequacy. The fiscal task related to adequacy is simple once the program and service needs are clearly specified. Placing a price tag on staff, equipment, and supplies is a straightforward exercise in cost analysis.

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Equity

Equity is quite simply, fairness. It is not necessarily equality. For example, requiring a rich person and a poor person (if all other things are the same) to pay the same dollar amount in taxes to support schools is not taxpayer equity, for the poor person would be paying a greater proportion of his/her income for this service. Providing an equal amount of funding for a 3rd grader with no special educational needs and a 3rd grader with one or more special educational needs would not be fair because either the dollars spent on the student with special needs would not be sufficient to meet these needs or the dollars spent on the student without special needs would be in excess of what was needed and perhaps could be better used in other ways.

Fairness suggests that those who are most able should pay more proportionately than those who are less able. Thus, responsibility for funding services becomes an issue. The state (all other things being equal) having the wealth of the state to draw upon is more able to pay for education than most individual local communities; wealthier communities are more able to pay for education programs than poor communities. State equalization formulas have been designed to provide fairness in funding by recognizing differences in the ability to pay of "rich" or "poor" districts.

Efficiency

Efficiency is used here to mean cost effectiveness. It embodies both expenditure issues and educational effectiveness issues. It does not necessarily mean the least cost. The fact that similar school districts may have significant teacher salary differences does not necessarily imply inefficiency. In most instances, labor market theory will tell us that districts that are similar in all ways but teacher compensation are likely employing teachers of different "quality" with the "best" teachers employed by the higher paying districts. This does not mean that one cannot find some excellent teachers in low paying school districts, but that is usually because the teacher cannot or will not relocate, and it is not a violation of the basic labor market principles. Spending less and educating students poorly is not efficiency. Efficiency in this context is spending no more than necessary to educate students to a certain level. Efficiency measures allow us to compare across time and geography. Efficiency also encompasses the concepts of simplicity and stability. In summary, the ability to measure the cost of a program and the effectiveness of the program are basic to the notion of efficiency.

Liberty

Liberty is the ability to choose. It encompasses flexibility and creativity. Historically, debates on liberty have been focused on "local control," with local school districts generally maintaining that they have none. Certainly, it could be argued that districts with insufficient resources to provide effective programs have no control, while those districts with an abundance of resources have many areas of control. In recent years, however, liberty has also become an issue for students and parents. When and how should parents and students have some choice in the education process? What are the implications for equity, in particular, of a system that focuses more on liberty than in the past? Can a system allow equitable choices for students, parents, and the community as consumers of education?

The Problem

Historically, the relationship, and most often, the conflict between equity and adequacy have been highlighted in the context of limited resources. That is, if the combination of state and local taxes are insufficient to serve all students adequately, there must be some trade-off in quality of services or quantity of students served. The practical result has been a system that is frequently inadequate and inequitable in the aggregate, and as a result of the inequity, very inadequate in both dollars and services for some local school districts.

The terms adequacy (the notion of sufficiency in funding) and efficiency (the notion of best use of resources), while interrelated, have often been confused in the political rhetoric. While it is likely true that education resources could be more efficiently allocated in many instances, that does not necessarily mean that current resources would be sufficient upon the attainment of "ultimate efficiency." At the same time, it is unlikely that sufficient resources could be provided if many of those resources were being used inefficiently. The debate over increased funding has not historically occurred in the context of "how much is enough?" to meet the expectations placed on school districts if it is assumed that they are operating efficiently. Perhaps the primary reason the debate was not framed this way was that the relationships between educational program policy and finance policy were not historically clear and well defined. In summary, funding can be equitable without being adequate, but it would be difficult for it to be adequate without equity unless resources are unlimited.

A Part of the Solution: State of the Art Values Clarification

The application of a concrete definition of efficiency may allow adequacy and equity to be reconciled, rather than in continual conflict. Until and unless education systems, including but not limited to their finance components, are found to be increasingly efficient, i.e., educating students to a specified standard at the least cost, communities and legislators and governors are legitimately unlikely to be willing to increase funding that may be necessary to provide programs and services to meet the needs of all children. To be equitable and adequate with limited resources, programming and funding must be efficient.

These conflicts of values have existed for over half a century. However, the "state of the art" existing today may bode well for the future of finance policy and may allow a reintegration of education programming and finance policy. The "state of the art" includes improved technology, improved evaluation capabilities, and improved identification and measurement of effective educational techniques. Prior to the advent of computers, finance systems had to be kept as simple as possible, although they were usually illogical and thus remained a mystery to most people. Today, the use of computers by most of the policy community allows expansion and increased precision in the use and understanding of data elements in finance formulas. Additionally, in recent years more and more of the characteristics of schools that are working well have been identified. While educators in the past have been bound by the notion that education was a black box and there was no clear relationship between "what went in and what came out," increasingly better information to help define what resources are necessary to meet identified education objectives, the tools to measure the effectiveness of the application of the resources and the technology to manage this information are now available. Finally, evaluation techniques are more refined than in the past and allow, as part of education information systems, the determination of the degree to which specific educational strategies are meeting the objectives of those who determine the

objectives and thus allow better assessment of both adequacy and efficiency.

Partnerships

In addition to the basic philosophical and technical aspects of school finance, it should be emphasized that education and its funding are major political issues at the local, state, and federal level and thus are not addressed in a pristine, rational vacuum. As a result, each and every element of what could be a fairly straightforward pursuit of goals is debated. Two major reasons explain the debate: (a) differing values, e.g., the belief by some that equity is more important than efficiency, and (b) alternative measures of the factors that make the values concrete result in different distributions of state funds.

The history of the pursuit of these goals is similar from state to state with only the names of the players changing. Adversaries, each promoting a different mix of value priorities and some organizational self-preservation, have secured their positions in these debates. What should be clear by now is the fact that these divisions hinder rather than enhance the attainment of these goals as the environment in which the goals are pursued becomes more challenging and almost hostile due to the rapidly changing demographic, social, and economic dynamics. It may be that the attainment of the goals is dependent on moving from the adversary (us versus them) model to the partnership model within education and across human services agencies and levels of government and even across public and private sector boundaries. If it is true that the problems are not contained by these boundaries, why should solutions be expected to be so contained?

The presentation that follows is based on the assumption that finance is a component of the education system, not a system unto itself. It assumes that fundamental education policy decisions, e.g. which programs and services have been proved effective, are being addressed. At issue here is how the criteria traditionally applied to "finance systems" are addressed in developing plans to finance programs for at-risk students. The criteria include adequacy, equity, efficiency (simplicity and stability), and liberty (flexibility and creativity).

Section I - Overview

Issues Related to Financing Programs and Services for Students at Risk

Suzanne Langston Juday

In an overview (Section I) of the fiscal issues surrounding at-risk programs and services, Suzanne Langston Juday identifies some of the many problems and questions that must be addressed in order to "provide adequate at-risk programs and services" in an "efficient and equitable manner." She views the at-risk population broadly since the purpose of her paper is to identify a wide range of relevant fiscal issues—focusing primarily on the needs of young people between birth and age 21.

In reporting the major policy issues related to funding programs and services for the at-risk population, Juday cites a lack of useful information in the areas

of effective programs now available, costs for effective programs, eligible population data, and current services data. Identifying costs of providing needed services is stressed by Juday in order to establish a foundation for (l) generating revenues, (2) distributing funds equitably, and (3) evaluating cost effectiveness.

Other issues such as whether or not investment in the at-risk student to be made by states and local communities should be in the area of prevention, early intervention, and/or later intervention are addressed, and Juday cites data suggesting that all three approaches are important.

According to Juday, recognizing the needs of the at-risk student to be both academic and support service oriented is key and will require "considerable non-academic professional assistance" in addition to education services. She calls for collaboration between the many public and private programs that provide services to at-risk students, setting national goals for serving this population, and clarifying the relationships among the various levels of government involved in this issue. Juday thinks that the federal government can assess national needs, be responsible for providing resources for meeting these needs, and support the collaborative and effective provision of services by aggressively participating in the development of accounting and reporting systems common across federal agencies/projects. It might also explore ways to help support the preparation and continuing staff development of education and human services professionals who can work together effectively. Federal funds could also reinforce collaboration and cooperation. Juday sees the state role to be identifying measurable expectations and assisting in broad planning efforts, including collection and dissemination of useful data. Additionally, states can broker information and provide technical assistance for local communities. "Providing services and monitoring performance have historically been viewed as conflicting roles, but the states clearly are required to do both, a real challenge to leadership."

Juday sees the role of local government as ensuring that services are provided that meet varying local needs "while attaining the standards set by the state and federal government." She concludes that "fundamental changes in the educational system as well as programming and funding that not just allows, but promotes cooperation and collaboration across traditional boundaries, is required."

The role of private sector funding is an important policy issue, according to Juday. She notes that what the private sector can do in terms of funding for incentives to collaborate, as matching funds, as quality enhancers, for research and development, or as seed money for specific programs is "substantially different than expecting any fundamental on-going commitment...."

Defining effectiveness in measurable terms and assessing both the effectiveness and efficiency of programs for at-risk students in light of the region's state education agencies' expenditure of "hundreds of millions of dollars" is of obvious importance to Juday. She offers an outline of some organizational characteristics common to locally based (not bureaucratic) programs and cites sources that document successful programs.

According to Juday, "a major dilemma for policymakers could be whether or

not to mandate the provision of these services," since existing data suggest that these programs result in "a large return on investment." However, she also recognizes the significant investment of public funds that this would require.

Other issues such as equalized or nonequalized funding across state and/or local boundaries are addressed with the conclusion that attempting to construct a funding system that is equitable for all communities should be a key goal, according to Juday. In addition, the "technical challenges" of "constructing a funding system that combines education funding that is state and locally generated with health and human services funding that is likely to be primarily state funded have been for the most part unaddressed."

To address these issues, Juday offers four models for possible financing alternatives and reviews the plans in terms of equity, efficiency, and quality of service that might result. She asks the question—Can organizational and individual biases be overcome and the political will be galvanized and exercised to successfully intervene in the lives of the young people at risk in this country?—and offers conclusions based on her study of this complex issue.

Section II-A

Funding Programs for Students at Risk in the NCREL Region

Section II-A provides data on at-risk programs in the seven-state North Central Region including such information as funding amounts and program description, number of eligible students served, and status of current legislation.

The introduction to the information offered in Section II includes a warning against comparison between states that could result in "faulty conclusions" since: (1) Many elements of the data sought were not available. (2) Each state provides significant amounts of state funding through some type of general state aid, and other funding is generated locally. Since this type of aid may be used to fund some of the programs included in this report, and since most states do not have a mechanism for reporting information on these expenditures, the total program expenditures reported here are likely to be understated. The extent of the understatement varies among states. (3) The individual state's approaches to the at-risk issue may vary significantly in such areas as distribution of funds and personnel, the number of programs addressing the same issue, and the specific content of each program.

Programs for which data are presented include:

Illinois: Four programs serving ages 3-21, primarily state funded.

Indiana: Administered as one program with the exception of a preschool program and bilingual services. Local school corporations submit plans for use of entitlement funds for individual types of services.

Iowa: Decentralized administration of state coordinated services. Local, state, federal, and private funds distributed by several state agencies.

Michigan: Eight programs supported with a combination of local, state, and federal funds provided primarily by local agency sub-units of state departments.

Minnesota: Approximately 40 programs administered with state, local, and federal funds. A single interagency umbrella group does not exist, communication takes place, and some formal interagency groups do exist.

Ohio: Nineteen programs serving preschool age to adult; funded by local, state, and federal funds with formalized interagency agreements in 75% of programs.

Wisconsin: Five state and federally funded programs—four serving preschool children. A wide variety of services are offered using funds which flow through the Department of Public Instruction and other state agencies.

Section II-B

State Definitions of "At Risk"

Section II-B contains in-depth definitions of "at risk" for each state in the seven-state North Central Region.

Section III - Expert Commentaries

George A. Chambers

In Section III, commentary by George Chambers addresses the financing issue by proposing that established thought and principles of funding should be utilized to provide focus, minimize failure, and speed up the achievement of goals. Established ideas and principles of finance can provide a firm basis for the future without the need for experimentation during the developmental period, according to Chambers. He, too, calls for cooperation between local, state, and federal agencies in reaching America's goal of adequate, equitable, efficient, and effective funding for all at-risk students and believes that success can be achieved "within a ten-year period," if his suggestions are implemented. He proposes:

- Federal equalization assistance to achieve equity among the states
- States to establish finance programs or models to ensure funding adequacy, equity, efficiency, and liberty, as far as practical

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- States to encourage local districts to exceed predetermined levels of minimal adequacy through additional funding (leeway)
- Varying levels of funding for varying levels of students at risk
- Student weighting to ensure funding equity and accurately determine adequacy
- Independence in local district programming and budgeting
- A local-state-federal funding partnership be developed with phased funding on a planned basis until programs are adequately funded

James G. Cibulka

The second commentary entitled "Equitable and Effective Funding for At-Risk Children and Youth" by James G. Cibulka calls our attention to the inadequate national graduation rate and asks whether the quality of education for at-risk students would be maximized even if the level of funding were deemed adequate. He calls for a "new social compact" with more government and school leaders underscoring "the urgency of this problem." He applauds Suzanne Juday for her attention to the need for more collaboration between state, federal, and local resources—both public and private—in fostering cooperation between social welfare, justice, health, housing, school, and other officials; more cooperative roles with parents in programs like Missouri's Parents as Teachers Program; new agreements with business; and finally, school restructuring experimentation to "increase our confidence" in what we know about programs that work.

Cibulka calls for the use of available resources to provide opportunities for experimentation and dissemination and support of model programs and the dissemination of information on their outcomes to other educators. He believes that the equalization of inter-district funding issue is not the end-all strategy toward improvement, but should be used "as a parallel path, providing a necessary foundation over the long term...." He foresees a need for "considerable infusions of revenues" in the future, but, for the time being, urges commitment of resources to improved programs through testing "improved programs for at-risk youth." If not accomplished, Chibulka warns of a future filled with the disappointments of the past and little evidence of improved performance from our students.

James Gordon Ward

Commentary by James Ward entitled "Fiscal Issues Relating to Services for At-Risk Students in the Midwest" addresses five distinct topics: 1) program adequacy; 2) program accountability and legitimacy; 3) systemic approach to services; 3) equalization of funding; and 5) social justice and equality of educational opportunity.

In the area of program adequacy, Ward concludes from his review of the data presented here that there are "serious questions" concerning the adequacy of present programs now serving children in the seven Midwest states. He also

notes that the large variance in funding from state to state "would indicate that adequacy levels in some states appear to be less sufficient than they are in others." In the area of accountability and legitimacy, Ward notes "few indications that a systematic effort is being made to ensure that the programs for at-risk children are reaching all eligible children and that the programs that are in place are achieving desired results."

Ward calls our attention to the scant amount of "formalized interagency/intergovernmental collaboration on services for at-risk children ...(that) has been identified nationally as a critical issue in at-risk programs" and calls for a systemic approach to coordinating the many services now provided by public and not-for-profit agencies and public schools. In addition, Ward notes a need for equalization of education funding within states: "Many states fund services for at-risk children through categorical state aid programs which are not equalized. That is to say, local school district ability to pay is not taken into account in the funding formula." Ward suggests using weighted pupil counts for at-risk and special needs students "that integrates the funding of services for such children into the general state grant-in-aid formula, which is generally equalized based on ability to support local services."

In the final portion of his paper, Ward notes that since we "know that the distribution of children at risk of educational failure in our society is not even in respect to class or race," then to "underserve or underfund...is per se discriminatory." He calls for serving these students "according to their needs, even if that requires additional resources over and above what other children receive...." He believes that in the Midwest states, the lack of "sufficient attention to at-risk children...comprises a form of discrimination based both on class and race that is far subtler than more overt forms of racial segregation, but its effect is no less pernicious."

Issues Related to Financing Programs and Services for Students at Risk

Suzanne Langston Juday

Introduction

Some of the most stirring written words in recent years are found in the introductory sections of recent reports and books addressing the issue of the needs of the "at-risk" population. Information on the current and projected demographic trends, the state of the human condition, and the present and future economic condition of our country abound. These data and arguments need not be repeated here. For dramatic evidence of this problem see Lisbeth Schorr's "Within Our Reach" (1989) and the Committee for Economic Development's (CED) "Children in Need" (1987). The facts appear to be that our nation is in danger if there is no intervention.

This article is intended to discuss the issues associated with financing the services and programs intended to provide such intervention. It focuses on identifying the fiscal issues that must be addressed in order to provide adequate programs and service for the at-risk population in an efficient and equitable manner. Please note that the issue encompasses more than the education of these students and thus it includes consideration of the role of non-education agencies. Additionally, it views the goal of the services as more than economic development.

A variety of definitions of at-risk populations are offered by policy groups and states. The definitions used by the states in the North Central Region can be found as part of the information from the states in the mid-section of this report. Adopting a national definition may be necessary in the long term to facilitate collaboration and coordination of services across levels of government, across agencies administering and providing services, and across the public and private sector boundaries. For the short term, however, it is important that state and local policymakers within a state adopt definitions that are at the very least complementary, if not actually the same. It is not the purpose of this paper to move toward consensus on a working definition of "at risk." Rather, it assumes that the appropriate level of consensus is a fundamental first step.

This document will view the at-risk population broadly. Since the purpose of the document is to identify relevant fiscal issues, an inclusive view is used to capture the range of issues, although it is likely that not all issues and options for solutions will be identified. However, the focus will be on the needs of young people between birth and age 21, recognizing that some of the support services necessary to help these people involve services to their parents. The terms *student, client,* and *population* will be used synonymously to refer to this group.

Assumptions underlying this paper are

- Program policy and fiscal policy are integrally linked: i.e., fiscal policy can support or undermine program policy
- Addressing program and other policy issues is required prior to developing a comprehensive and integrated fiscal policy, and

- Viewing program and fiscal policy independently is inappropriate and inefficient

The sections that follow provide a presentation of the issues specific to funding programs and services for the at-risk population followed by a preliminary discussion and evaluation of several options for addressing these issues.

Policy Issues Related to Funding Programs and Services for the At-Risk Population

Information Availability

Trend information and "outcome" information suggest there are tremendous and increasing populations of students at risk of failure and that professionals need to be prepared to serve these people. Yet, precisely what is known about the population to be served in any given community, state, or the country?

Anecdotal information suggests programs are working in a variety of places. Yet, precisely what is known about effective programs and services, and perhaps as important, ineffective programs and services? What is known about appropriate measures of success? How are policymakers to continue to generate public support for the funds needed for these services, and how can policy makers continue to justify spending large amounts of funds (in the billions nationally) in the absence of better information on the need for and the effectiveness of these services?

Some of the currently used definitions for students at risk use indicators of populations at risk, while other definitions use behaviors to identify the populations. Examples of the former, for which some data may be more readily available, include single parent families, poverty, and race. Examples of the later include teenage pregnancy, very low academic achievement, dropping out of school, and substance abuse. Although, a census of needs/behaviors might be more precise in designing programs and funding them, the use of indicators can generally identify the target population, particularly for determining resource needs and allocating these resources (certainly for the short term). Of course, services should be provided based on the specific needs of individuals.

Although large amounts of data exist that are related to the issues to be discussed below, the ability to ensure adequate and efficient provision of services for students at risk is hindered by the lack of useful information. Examples of the kinds of information required are:

- Characteristics and components of effective programs
- Costs, not expenditures (see Appendix, 1.), for effective programs
- Eligible population
- Current services data

Current services data should include information such as: How effective are the programs currently being offered? What are current expenditures for the program? What is the source of funding? What are the requirements for the funding? Who is currently providing services? Who is receiving what services?

The purposes of identifying the costs of providing needed services is to establish a foundation for (1) generating revenues, (2) distributing funds equitably and (3) evaluating cost effectiveness. If this cost identification process is done well,

the final figure should be an indication of the funds needed from all sources to adequately provide the particular program under discussion.

The lack of data does not mean services cannot be offered in the short and intermediate terms. The importance of good data does mean that efforts should be underway at all levels to develop data collection systems employing common formats and definitions.

Prevention and Intervention

One issue to be resolved in states and local communities is the relative investment to be made in prevention, early intervention, and later intervention. Some data suggest preventing the state of "at riskness" is the best approach. Preventing teen pregnancy and providing good nutrition and prenatal care for all low income mothers would reduce the number of students in the future who suffer from physiological problems due to harm prior to birth. For those children born into poverty and/or born with physical or mental impairments, the earliest possible intervention appears to be effective and cost-effective in reducing the number of students requiring later more costly interventions. Other data indicate that a single intervention early on is probably not sufficient for students who live in the chaotic conditions many of these young people face. Thus, early childhood programs alone without ongoing attention to the lack of parental support many children experience and the violence and substance abuse many face daily may not be sufficient. (CED, 1987, p. 22; Schorr, 1989)

Academic and Non-academic Needs

Examples of services that are provided for at-risk students include remedial instruction for low-achieving students, compensatory programs designed to supplement the resources students bring from the home, pre-school programs of a compensatory nature—often including a great deal of attention to readiness and social skill development, dropout prevention and reentry programs, programs for the limited English proficient student and migrant children, substance abuse programs, programs for teen parents and the prevention of premature parenthood, and job training/employment programs. Some of these programs are academic and are clearly within the "traditional" purview of the schools. Some provide a wide range and variety of combinations of support services for children and youth and their families.

In order to understand resource needs and appropriate roles for relevant parties, it is useful to recognize that the needs of these young people include both academic and non-academic services. How are academic programs and services that are effective for at-risk students different from/similar to services meeting the needs of all pupils? Slavin, Karweit and Madden (1989) in their book Effective Programs for Students at Risk, indicate that the instructional strategies that are effective for these students are the same that are effective for other students. That is not to say that the same strategy works for all students; rather, it indicates that a good teacher can identify what works for a given student whether that student is at risk or not. Slavin, et al. argue that the behaviors of a good teacher for regular students are the same as the behaviors of a good teacher for at-risk students (Slavin et al. 1989, P. 356).

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) in their evaluation of programs recognized for serving at-risk students suggested that the education system as currently structured meets the academic needs of few students and is most counterproductive to learning for the population of students at risk. James

Comer and Henry Levin have developed approaches to schooling consistent with this view. ECS suggests that restructuring strategies including rethinking the use of time, reorganizing curriculum, utilizing pedagogical alternatives, examining staffing and location alternatives, as well as specific efforts to break the social class system that is currently too often reinforced through the structure of the education system, will improve the opportunities and outcomes for at-risk students (Dougherty, de Lone and Odden, 1989, pp. 18-24).

A major distinction, then, between meeting the needs of students at risk and those who are not may be the need for non-academic support services that have historically been considered outside of the purview of schools (although increasingly these services are being provided in and by schools). This statement should not be interpreted as suggesting that addressing the academic needs of these students is insignificant or unimportant. Rather, as the ECS report and Slavin suggest, failure to address improved school organization and instruction is more detrimental to this population then to "regular" students.

Educators might argue that expectations have increased in recent years regarding their role in providing these support services at a time when educational expectations have risen and resources to meet both sets of expectations have not risen proportionately. While educators as a group would likely agree that it is difficult, if not impossible, for students at risk to learn when burdened with the variety of problems their non-school environment imposes on them, they have not wanted to be the primary source of non-educational services. Regardless of who provides these service, the fact remains that in order to ensure that young people do complete their educational experiences prepared to be productive employees and contributing citizens, many of these young people will require considerable non-academic professional assistance. Thus, determining resource needs to serve this population should include decisions about appropriate academic and educational services and the integration of non-academic services.

Collaboration

Few other sets of programs or services encompass such a lengthy age spectrum or cut across such a broad number of agencies and levels of government. Programs for at-risk students are frequently provided by and funded through public assistance agencies; education agencies including special education, bilingual education, and compensatory education; public health agencies; employment/training agencies; juvenile justice agencies; etc. Each of these has agencies at the local, state, and federal level. Additionally, many businesses and not-for-profit organizations are funding and providing programs and services for this population.

As a result of this plethora of funding and regulating entities and the widespread lack of coordination among them, local service providers spend relatively large amounts of time in the aggregate satisfying diverse sets of bureaucratic requirements for eligibility, funding, and performance. It is not unreasonable to assume that these bureaucratic efforts are funded at the expense of the provision of services. This is particularly true for service providers with multiple funding sources. What coordination and collaboration takes place among levels of government and agencies appears to be accomplished either through local or individual initiative to work together and to a less frequent and less effective extent through legislated interagency agreements.

Intergovernmental Relationships

In order to address the issues surrounding appropriate roles and relationships for the various levels of the public sector and for the nonprofit sector, answers to the following questions should be developed:

- Who should be responsible for funding?
- Who should be responsible for setting standards?
- Who should make program delivery decisions?
- Who is accountable?

Current models of shared responsibility may be most appropriate when addressing these issues.

Federal and State Government

The role of the federal government relative to this issue has at least three aspects. A portion of the role of the federal government is to assess national needs. That is, federal policymakers could legitimately specify expectations for the schools and students across the country without regard to state and local expectations. The President and the nation's Governors are currently addressing broad educational goals, although the way these goals translate into specific and measurable expectations for which local service providers can plan and be held accountable remain undecided. Secondly, the federal government has a responsibility for providing resources in meeting these expectations. The federal government could have responsibility for those high cost efforts that exceed the ability of states and local school districts to pursue—research and development, equalizing funding for programs for populations that are not proportionately distributed among the states, etc. Finally, the federal government can support the collaborative and effective provision of services locally by aggressively participating in the development of accounting and reporting systems common across federal agencies/projects. It might also explore ways to help support the preparation and continuing staff development of education and human services professionals who can work together effectively. Federal funds could also reinforce collaboration and cooperation.

Although there are some similarities in the roles of the federal and state governments, e.g. (1) identifying measurable expectations, (2) developing compatible, if not uniform reporting and accounting requirements across agencies, and (3) equalization of services among lower levels of government, the state role goes beyond these functions and the relative emphasis on these areas may not necessarily be the same. Because the state is closer to the actual delivery of services than the federal government, the state can assist in broad planning efforts, including the collection and preparation of useful data. The state should also play a substantial role in funding the delivery of these services. Clearly, state economies, values, and politics will dictate what the balance of state versus local funding will be, but all other things being equal, the greater the level of state funding relative to local funding, the greater the equity of the funding system. Additionally, the state can broker information and provide technical assistance for local communities. Providing service and monitoring performance have historically been viewed as conflicting roles, but the states clearly are required to do both, a real challenge to leadership.

Local Government and School.

The delivery of services must take place at the local level. Thus, the role of local government is to ensure that services are provided that meet varying local needs while attaining the standards set by the state and federal government.

It is clear that (a) the school as we have known it and as it is legally empowered and financially supported cannot comprehensively address this problem and (b) schools cannot address this issue alone. Thus, fundamental changes in the educational system as well as programming and funding that not only allow, but promote cooperation and collaboration across traditional boundaries, are required.

Can and should schools provide all the services for young people at risk? Can and should schools provide a common service delivery point for these students? Should schools provide only educational services? Cogent arguments against the first and last of these options can be made. In partial response to the first question, it is not likely that funds and responsibility for health care needs, for example, will be added in total to the responsibility of educators, e.g., that teachers will be required to be LPN's as well as teachers. On the other end of the continuum, teachers and administrators recognize that students bring their problems with them to school. Removing the possibility of addressing these problems in the school setting is inefficient and unreasonable. These cursory arguments against the extreme views of the role of schools suggests that using the school as a common service delivery point or perhaps as the hub for coordinating services may have some merit. Policymakers should explicitly address this issue with the ultimate resolution being the development of collaborative and/or coordinated service delivery plans that will likely vary from community to community but in which school buildings, personnel, and access to young people will be critical.

Non-Public Sector

Many successful programs are funded with private sector support. Many successful programs are provided by not-for-profit organizations (CED 1987; Schorr 1989). What are reasonable assumptions/expectations about the role of private organizations and not-for-profit agencies in terms of funding and providing these services? It is important to be clear about these assumptions in order to adequately determine (a) the public funding (vis-a-vis private funding) level necessary to serve the eligible population and (b) the kinds of services to be delivered by the public sector vis-a-vis the not-for-profit agencies that might receive public funds to deliver some of these services. The use of private funds as an incentive to collaborate, as matching funds, as quality enhancers, as research and development funds, or as seed money is substantially different than expecting any fundamental on-going commitment from the private sector to a public problem with significant private sector consequences. Thus, the appropriate role for private sector funds is another issue for policy makers to address.

If effective programs are to be institutionalized, relationships among levels of government and sectors of the economy will have to be more interactive than hierarchical. Thus, for example, the standards, definitions of effectiveness, measurement tools, and reporting formats established by the state and federal governments should be developed in consultation with local service providers.

Local school officials should be responsible for making decisions about local goals beyond or in addition to state and federal goals and the methods of attaining them including the discretion to decide which programs they will provide given the available resources.

Bureaucracy, Flexibility, and Accountability

As indicated earlier, comprehensive program expenditure data do not appear to be available, but data provided by the states of the North Central Region suggest hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent by state education agencies in this region alone to serve this population. Given this level of funding, the importance of defining effectiveness in measurable terms and assessing both effectiveness and efficiency is obvious.

Anecdotal evidence from a variety of sources and presented in Within Our Reach and Children in Need suggest that effective programs have been locally based and are not bureaucratic. Other organizational characteristics common to these programs include:

- Offering a broad spectrum of services
- Crossing traditional professional and bureaucratic boundaries
- Seeing the child in the context of family and the family in the context of its surroundings
- Professionals being seen as people who care about and respect those they serve and who are trusted
- Providing coherent and easy-to-use services
- Professionals adapting or circumventing traditional professional and bureaucratic limitations, when necessary, to meet the needs of those they serve
- Professionals being able to redefine their roles to respond to needs (Schorr 1989, pp. 257-259)

Can flexibility and accountability be reconciled? Elements important to gauging program efficiency but that also support local program discretion reconcile the objectives of accountability and flexibility and include commonly agreed upon and measurable outcomes, resources sufficient to attain these outcomes, and a measurement system and mechanism to intervene when performance is lacking. It is important to note here that the strategies for using the resources are not necessarily at issue if the strategies are equally cost-effective. Thus, it is possible to minimize the bureaucracy between receipt of funds and evaluation. Identifying alternative strategies for providing services and the resources necessary to provide the programs for serving the at-risk population is important to the teaching/learning/serving process in order to maximize limited public resources. (See Appendix, 2.) The purpose of specifying resources is not to dictate program delivery, which should be a function of professional judgement at the site, rather it is to ensure an efficient system and an equitable allocation of resources to all providers. State and local policymakers could ensure that such a process is in place. Such systems for maximizing accountability and minimizing bureaucracy will likely vary from state to state.

Mandates or Incentives

A major dilemma for policymakers could be whether or not to mandate the provisions of these services, recognizing that the data suggest a large return on this investment, but also recognizing that the current level of unserved young people would likely require significant investments of public funds. Most states appear to be mandating some programs but providing incentives for the provision of most services. A problem with the use of incentives without some structure is the inequitable allocation of resources among communities within a state. Additionally, policy research suggests that mandating services without the capability to provide them is not generally effective or efficient.

Equalized or Non-Equalized Funding

Another significant and currently little-addressed issue is whether or not services to this population should vary as a result of location or whether these students should have access to comparable services in Gary, Indiana or Cairo, Illinois or Madison, Wisconsin, or any two cities within a state. If policymakers determine that comparable services should be available, then some form of equalization of funding and/or services should be pursued. That is, factors beyond the control of school districts or communities that affect spending, such as local wealth or high concentrations of high-cost students, should be considered in state or federal funding allocations.

Equalization as a concept in education finance takes into account (a) local communities' ability to pay for programs (most often in terms of property values), (b) the needs of the students in terms of the number of students and the varying costs of educating them due to varying educational needs, and (c) the tax effort made by the community to support these programs. Since local taxes are not available in all states to fund services for the at-risk population, only one of these elements is applicable to current state and federal funding schemes outside the education arena—the numbers and varying needs of the clients in terms of the services required.

The policy and, subsequently, the technical challenges arising from attempts to construct a funding system that is equitable across states and communities when combining education funding that is state and locally generated with health and human services funding that is likely to be primarily state funded have been for the most part unaddressed. (For states where some local health and human services programs are supported by a property tax, it could be argued that the application of the education equalization model could be appropriate.) State and federal policymakers must first decide whether some degree of equalization of services is an appropriate policy for both education and non-education services and funding.

Categorical and General Aid

A major argument against categorically funding programs, an approach used for many of the recent education reform programs, is the lack of consideration of the relationship between the adequacy and more often the equity consequences of the funding mechanism for new programs vis-a-vis the state funding formula that distributes most state aid on an equalized (to one degree or another) basis. Far too often the reform programs or other categorical programs work in opposition to the general state aid systems. The effect of distributing these reform funds on a categorical basis has frequently been that the districts most able to pay for these services with local tax funds or those with fewer high cost students receive the same or larger per pupil amounts of

state funding, for example, than the poorer districts or those with higher proportions of high cost students. Frequently, grant programs distribute equal amounts per pupil, but do not fully fund the cost of the program. Thus, each of the school districts is required to subsidize the program—this being easier for wealthier districts to do. For programs that are funded on a proposal basis, the wealthier districts are again at an advantage because they are more likely to have staff available who are trained in writing successful grant proposals. These circumstances can also apply to non-education programs.

Categorical funding is utilized as a way to target funds. Targeting funds for these services can occur in other ways such as accounting for the higher costs of these services as part of a school district's general state aid funding. For example, since 1973 Illinois has distributed funding through the general state aid formula based on the relative proportion of Chapter I students in each school district. Using an audit trail can also ensure that funds are not diverted to use for other purposes.

It should be noted that categorical funding methods can be equalized and have been in some states; thus, the goal of equalization can be attained using either approach. The primary distinctions between the use of a categorical funding approach and a general aid formula approach are that categorical funding more easily supports the establishment of pilot programs and allows public attention to be focused on a specific program that may be useful for political emphasis.

Possible Financing Alternatives

How, then, should a funding system for programs serving students at risk work? Can it be and should it be structured to (a) identify effective programs and the costs of delivering specific services for a school and/or school district, (b) hold recipients accountable for meeting certain objectives, (c) revise the resource configurations as more is learned about effective programs, (d) distribute adequate funds, equitably, (e) foster collaboration, and finally, (f) simultaneously minimize bureaucracy and yet provide sufficient accountability?

State funding approaches directly responsive to a, b and c above can and have been developed for a variety of programs. The difficulty arises in trying to address d, e and f. By combining the elements of a system in several ways, alternative models take shape. Some of these options are described below. All of these approaches assume that some degree of collaboration is required at the state level.

A proportionate increase in funding for all schools to cover these services is not viewed as an acceptable solution by itself because the students needing services are not proportionately distributed among school districts and communities. Also, the current base funding is not generally equitable across school districts and other agencies providing services. Therefore, rethinking the mechanism to be used to distribute funds for these program is appropriate.

Competitive/Collaborative/Cost-Based Funding (CCC)

This approach would generate an entitlement amount for each community based on the cost of providing education and non-education services provided to the eligible at-risk population. At least the education portion of the entitlement would take into account the ability of the community to pay for

these programs although equity in access and quality of services would be a guiding principle. Funds would be allotted upon receipt of a plan prepared collaboratively by community agencies and determined to be acceptable by an interagency body at the state level. Depending on the source of funds, each community's entitlement would be reserved for its sole use, thus precluding reallocation to other locations, but it could not be distributed until an acceptable plan was submitted. Various collaborative groups within a community could develop plans, including non-public entities, so there could be some competition at the local level. Carried to its logical extreme, schools could be excluded from receiving these funds directly if they did not participate in the collaborative effort.

A major obstacle to the easy implementation of this approach is the incongruity of service boundaries for various agencies. This is not an insurmountable problem, but clearly one that would need attention. Perhaps a more serious flaw in this approach is the magnitude of change that would need to occur to effect it. As a result, it would likely face serious political opposition. Perhaps, this plan is more appropriate for the long term rather than as a short-term objective.

Collaborative Cost-Based Funding (C2)

This approach is similar to CCC except that funds would flow directly to a previously determined administrative agent in the community, thus eliminating the competitive element. It would contain the cost-based funding element, collaboration in plan development, and review. Again, the boundary incongruity is a problem. It is not appreciably different from CCC and, thus, would likely face similar political opposition.

Glue Money Only

This approach would essentially continue current funding mechanisms except that a pool of state funds would be available to support the initial and/or ongoing costs of collaboration among local agencies and service providers, including schools. This pool of state funds has been termed "glue money" by Michael Kirst (American Education Finance Association Speech, March 17, 1990) and would be available upon approval of a plan prepared collaboratively by community agencies and determined to be acceptable by a state interagency body. Additionally, this approach would allow funds to be pooled at the local rather than the state level. There would be no equalization of funds in this approach. Because the "glue money" is the only major change from current practice, this incremental approach is likely to generate little political opposition. It also makes very little progress in addressing the delivery of services or in the adequate, efficient distribution of dollars.

State Fund Consolidation

This approach would consolidate state funds as currently generated by each agency for each locality and distribute them as a result of a successful plan review similar to that described in Glue Money Only. It contains the "glue money" concept as well as the collaboration at the local level and state level plan review found in C2. This is a somewhat more ambitious proposal than Glue Money Only, but is not as "radical" as CCC and C2. It is difficult to predict the political response, which would likely vary from state to state, although it could be argued that "turf" is lost for no gain in resources. Again, incongruous

boundaries would create problems. Equalization would not be addressed, although distributing funds this way could provide information on total funding for these services in each area.

Any of these approaches could be used to support pilot or demonstration programs that would allow the development of better information on effective programs.

Although these models have been discussed from the perspective of the state supporting local efforts, the same options exist for federal support to the states.

Evaluating The Alternatives

Quality

Do these approaches support adequate services and sufficient funding? Any of these approaches can support adequate services regardless of how adequacy is defined, but until and unless (a) clear objectives are stated, (b) more substantive definitions of the required services are provided, c) measures of performance are more widely used, (d) documentation of the unserved population is complete, and finally (e) clarification regarding current service efficiency (i.e., absence of duplication of services) is known, governors and legislators are not likely to support potentially necessary increased funds for these programs. However, once these pieces of information are available and used in approaches that take into account program costs such as CCC and C2 do, support for adequate funding and ultimately adequate services may be more likely.

Options such as CCC that have an element of competition could also have an edge in increasing quality since in the case of alternative proposals, the best plan could be selected. Of course, in some sparsely populated areas, only one proposal might be submitted, so competition should not be the fundamental quality assurance element.

Equity

CCC and C2 are potentially the most equitable since the "needs" of the clientele are explicitly recognized. Additionally, any approach that takes account of local ability to pay such as CCC does (where that is appropriate) will be more equitable than one that does not consider ability to pay. Combining these aspects in CCC does suggest the fairest distribution of resources.

Efficiency

Is it possible to have an efficient system without bureaucracy? Is accountability dependent on bureaucracy? All approaches except State Fund Consolidation suggest that both fiscal and programmatic accountability can be accommodated without "bureaucratic obstruction." In CCC and C2, fiscal accountability begins with an entitlement determination that is based on the cost of providing effective services and which includes expectation of some accounting for use of funds through one comprehensive annual mechanism rather than multiple piecemeal evaluations. Because funds are not awarded until after plans for the use of the funds are approved, programmatic accountability begins early in the process. The bureaucracy does not intervene again until performance is evaluated, again through one comprehensive mechanism, not multiple ones. Actual performance serves as input for approval of future plans.

The models that are most supportive of collaboration (CCC, C2, and State Fund Consolidation) have the greatest potential for promoting efficiency in terms of reducing duplication of services, as well as in humanely and comprehensively meeting the needs of this population.

It is also important to note that although the premise of this approach is "scientific," it is not dependent on precision and perfection in the educational process. It was suggested in the Introduction to this report that improvements in the ability to identify effective programs and measure the effectiveness are now available. Improvements in funding and services can begin as continued improvements in evaluation continue.

Conclusions

The literature suggests that much of what has to be done to address this issue is known—in terms of the process. A major question to be answered is: Can organizational and individual biases be overcome and the political will be galvanized and exercised to successfully intervene in the lives of the young people at risk in this country? From the information available to us about the next steps in addressing financing programs and services for students at risk, it can be concluded that policymakers must:

1. Commit to collaborative processes with specific responsibilities for each level of government and for the non-public sector with the recognition that each set of factors can and should have input to decisions of the other.

    A. Identify common objectives in measurable terms that cross agencies and levels of government.

    B. Work on data collection systems by all levels of government employing common formats and definitions.

        (1) eligible population

        (2) program data

2. Identify programs and services that meet these objectives.

3. Identify resource needs to support these programs.

4. Develop common accounting system and complementary reporting system.

5. Develop a funding mechanism based on the cost of meeting the needs of clientele and, at least for the education components, on the ability to pay for programs.

6. Require collaboratively developed and approved plans for the release of funds.

It would be naive to suggest that these next steps will be accomplished quickly or easily. The efforts of the past few years to identify performance measures for education should provide some indication of the challenge ahead. However, the difficulty of the task is not sufficient rationale for failure to undertake it.

In the near term, while data are being collected and common processes and procedures are being developed, one of the most important steps that can be taken is to make sure that all programs offered are evaluated in ways that allow assessment of costs, expenditures, and performance in order to hasten the time when good data on cost effectiveness are widely available. Additionally, any new funds should be used as "glue funds" to support collaborative efforts.

In the intermediate term, legislators and Governors should prepare to appreciably increase funding to support these services. If the results of investigation show that the costs of serving this population, less any efficiencies gained through collaboration, are greater than current expenditures, serious attention should be given to the words of the CED report. This is an investment that over a period of time could result in reduced expenditures in human services, corrections, etc., and in fact, should result in a reduction in the need for these services as well as improvement in the quality of life for us all.

This paper has raised many questions and has not been exhaustive or definitive in its provision of answers. It is clear that professionals and officials will continue to identify more and better options as they work together to meet the urgent needs of so many of our young people.

Appendix

1. The cost is the amount necessary to provide a program defined by specific characteristics, e.g., staff (administrative, professional, and support), class or caseload size, special equipment, and other unique needs. The primary differences between cost and expenditure are the availability of funds and the choices policymakers make about the "quality" or richness of the program they will provide.

Determining program costs is largely dependent on three types of infor-mation: who needs to be served (how many), what are their needs, and what programs and services are used in meeting these needs. The process for identifying the cost of a specified program is quite logical and straight-forward and can be as simple or complex as policymakers choose. Cost issues are not dependent on or even related to who pays for the services.

To determine the cost of a comprehensive at-risk program, one might ask some of the following questions. What staffing requirements exist for both academic and nonacademic services, including for example, social workers, nurses, nutritionists, aides, teachers, clerical staff, and administrators? How many students can a professional effectively serve? Is there a need for special and particularly high cost equipment? Are there other unique resource needs that affect the cost of this program?

2. As more is learned about the relationship between specific resources and delivery systems and the effectiveness of these components, adjustment can be made in the resource costs used as a basis for funding. These adjustments could be increases or decreases. For example, increasing the use of technology at a rate faster than the increase in the use of teachers may be more effective in some areas of service and might reduce the cost of delivering a certain program. The opposite might be true in another program area or for students of another age level. Monitoring program effectiveness and the relationships of alternative resource mixes on effectiveness will allow an ongoing assessment of cost/efficiency.

In addition to relating program outcomes and resource needs, an ongoing connection can be made between resource needs and available revenue. If insufficient revenue is available to provide specific programs in an effective manner to serve the population in need, then some accommodations have to be made. One option is to reduce the number of students served and continue to provide effective programming for the greatest number of students possible given resource constraints. Another option is to reduce the quality of the program and diminish its effectiveness, but continue to serve the full population of students. To the extent that funding for education remains a political issue, this approach allows those who make these decisions to have information regarding costs and benefits to include in their decision-making process.

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Funding Programs for Students at Risk in the NCREL Region

The preceding section identified some of the fiscal issues associated with the provision of programs for students at-risk. This section provides information about the provision and funding of these programs in each of the seven states in the North Central Region.

The purpose of this information is to provide a picture of the kinds of "at-risk" programs initiated by and funded with dedicated state and federal funds, to provide some indication of the ways in which these funds are distributed, and to provide a view of some of the ways the states are addressing the issues raised in the preceding overview of issues. Additionally, the data illustrate some points made in the commentaries which follow. However, comparisons across states cannot be made based on these data alone.

The reader may note that many elements of the data which were sought are not currently available. This highlights some of the data issues identified by Suzanne Langston Juday in her overview. For example, in most states identifying the level of funding provided by non-education agencies for these services was virtually impossible. This is particularly noteworthy if, as Juday suggests, collaborative efforts are to be encouraged. Additionally, each state provides significant amounts of state education funding through some form of general state aid, and other funding is generated locally. These general state aid and locally raised funds may or may not be used to support the programs being discussed here. Most states do not have a mechanism for capturing information on these expenditures, and thus, the total program expenditures reported here are likely to be understated. The extent of the understatement varies among the states. As a result, these data, when viewed apart from the total state funding and service delivery program, may not present the entire picture for the seven states studied. Additionally, the approaches the states have taken with regard to the state role in the area of at-risk students vary significantly. Some states appear to be distributing less direct aid through the education budget, but appear to be making great investments in personnel to support efforts across state and community agencies. Some states have one identifiable program operated by their education department with great diversity within the program, and others have numerous discrete programs addressing the same issues. Finally, these fiscal data do not describe the substance of the programs, which vary among the states as well. **For all of these reasons comparison among the states is ill-advised and would likely result in faulty conclusions.**

Please note that data are for 1988-89 unless specifically noted. Also, these data were provided by the state departments of education of the respective states.

ILLINOIS

I. Number of at-risk programs with SEA involvement	4
II. Formalized interagency/ intergovernmental collaboration	2 of 4 programs
III. Total non-education funds (in millions)	n/a
IV. Program Descriptions	
1. Students eligible for program	676,700
2. Population determined by	estimate
3. Students receiving this service	164,438
4. Ages of students served	3 - 21
5. Total expenditures (in millions)	$51.97
State	$51.97
Local	$ 0.00
Federal	$ 0.00
6. Program required	optional with incentives/ one mandate
7. Program funding methods	equalized & non-equalized categorical funds/ competitive grants
8. Eligible service deliverers	local school districts & not-for-profit organizations
9. Accountability/effectiveness measures	input/process/performance

Illinois has four programs serving students at risk ages 3-21. These programs, which are primarily state funded, include remedial summer school, truant/dropout services, and special education and at-risk preschool services. Formalized collaboration is present in the two preschool programs. Approximately 25% of the eligible student population receive services. Current legislation will require that teachers in the at-risk preschool program hold early childhood education certification. Increased appropriations are the only expected legislative changes.

INDIANA

I. Number of at-risk programs with SEA involvement	1
II. Formalized interagency/ intergovernmental collaboration	yes
III. Total non-education funds (in millions)	n/a
IV. Program Descriptions	
1. Students eligible for program	185,361
2. Population determined by	estimate
3. Students receiving this service	124,460
4. Ages of students served	Pre-K - grade 12
5. Total expenditures (in millions)	$27.50
State	$20.00
Local	$ 7.50
Federal	$ 0.00
6. Program required	optional with incentives
7. Program funding methods	non-competitive grants
8. Eligible service deliverers	local school districts
9. Accountability/effectiveness measures	input/process

Indiana's at-risk services are primarily state funded and with the exception of a pre-school program and bilingual services are funded and administered as one program. Local school corporations submit program plans for the use of entitlement dollars for one of several types of services: counseling, pre-school services, dropout prevention, etc. An advisory committee provides the opportunity for interagency collaboration. Programs are optional. Approximately 2/3 of the eligible students are being served. Currently, $3 million of the state's appropriation for at-risk programs is set aside for preschool at-risk and early childhood education programs.

IOWA

I. Number of at-risk programs with SEA involvement	
II. Formalized interagency/ intergovernmental collaboration	yes
III. Total non-education funds (in millions)	n/a
IV. Program Descriptions	
1. Students eligible for program	1/3 - 1/2 of all students
2. Population determined by	primarily estimate
3. Students receiving this service	85% of eligible
4. Ages of students served	preschool - grade 14
5. Total expenditures (in millions)	$99.00
State	$50.00 *
Local	$19.00
Federal	$30.00
6. Program required	optional
7. Program funding methods	competitive grants/ state aid formula/ local tax rate
8. Eligible service deliverers	local school districts & non-profit & for-profit organizations
9. Accountability/effectiveness measures	input/process/outcomes

* ***includes special education funds***

Iowa's at-risk services are coordinated at the state level but are highly decentralized in administration. The Department of Education requires a plan for serving this population but does not require a formal program for doing so. A wide range of services are provided from a combination of local, state, federal, and private funds distributed by several state agencies including the Department of Education. At minimum, 85% of Iowa's students complete their high school education and 85% of those who drop out of high school are reached and enrolled in second chance education via alternative schools, GED, and adult education programs, learning centers and other options programs. Support service deliverers for in-school and out-of-school students cover a wide range of organizations from public school districts to for-profit entities with which public agencies contract. Current legislation will provide for growth in preschool services, increase followup on dropouts, increase/improve the coordination of special education and regular education services, and improve the coordination between schools and service agencies.

MICHIGAN

I. Number of at-risk programs with SEA involvement	8
II. Formalized interagency/ intergovernmental collaboration	4 of 8 programs
III. Total non-education funds (in millions)	$50.63
State	$ 0.38
Federal	$50.25
Local	$ 0.00
Other	$ 0.00
IV. Program Descriptions	
1. Students eligible for program	1,901,430
2. Population determined by	estimate/census
3. Students receiving this service	1,084,150
4. Ages of students served	4 - 21
5. Total expenditures (in millions)	$230.17
State	$ 57.34
Local	$ 11.00
Federal	$161.83
6. Program required	primarily optional/ one mandate
7. Program funding methods	all types
8. Eligible service deliverers	LEAs
9. Accountability/effectiveness measures	input/process/performance

The Michigan Department of Education, in cooperation with other departments of state government, funds many programs that serve at-risk populations. The cooperative efforts of governmental departments are far ranging and include, for example, the Departments of Social Services, Commerce, Labor, and Mental Health. The Michigan "at-risk programs" are supported with a combination of funds from local, state, and federal governments. However, they are primarily delivered by local agency sub-units of the state departments. The Michigan programs serve both youth and adults in various categories such as: limited English proficiency, handicapped, migrants, dropouts and potential dropouts, teen parents, linguistic and racial/ethnic minorities, homeless, single parents/homemakers, economically disadvantaged, special needs, refugees, juvenile offenders, at-risk preschoolers, displaced workers, and gifted and talented. Service coverage to the identified groups varies according to the availability of funds. However, because many of the programs are multifaceted, the crossover of responsibility assures a high degree of service coverage. Thus, although it is difficult to compute the direct service cost per at-risk individual, substantial support, $311,057,500 for FY1989-90, and programs to serve the broad spectrum of needs faced by both youth and adult at-risk populations are readily available. In addition, legislation presently being debated indicates that some programs are likely to receive increased support and that collaborative efforts will be increased as part of the future service delivery to at-risk populations.

MINNESOTA

I. Number of at-risk programs with SEA involvement	40
II. Formalized interagency/ intergovernmental collaboration	yes
III. Total non-education funds (in millions)	n/a
IV. Program Descriptions	
1. Students eligible for program	All students to specific population
2. Population determined by	estimate
3. Students receiving this service	percentage varies
4. Ages of students served	birth - death
5. Total expenditures (in millions)	n/a
6. Program required	most optional/ some mandates
7. Program funding methods	many categorical funded/ some state aid funds/ competitive grants
8. Eligible service deliverers	local school districts & not-for-profit organizations
9. Accountability/effectiveness measures	Varies widely with program. MN Student Survey is broad-based ongoing study of at-risk & health-related problems & concerns of students in grades 6, 9 & 12.

Minnesota's Department of Education participates in the provision of services for learners at risk through approximately 40 different programs, funded with local, state, and federal funds and administered by a variety of state agencies. The proportion of eligible students receiving services ranges from a very small proportion to virtually 100% depending on the program. Comprehensive and accurate information on expenditures for these services is not available. There is a great deal of informal interagency collaboration and some interagency formal groups. A single interagency umbrella group does not exist. Current and future legislation is expected to lead to more comprehensive policies and programs for delivering these services. Minnesota uses the Minnesota Sutdent Survey, a broad based ongoing study of at-risk and health-related problems and concerns of students in grades 6, 9, and 12 to provide information for policymakers. Some examples of programs aimed at learners at risk are early childhood screening (an early intervention program aimed at three-year-olds), the federal drug and alcohol abuse prevention program, the high school graduation incentives program (allowing at-risk youth and adults to change types and locations of diploma program), adolescent parent and pregnancy program and area learning centers (alternative, interagency approaches to help youth and adults earn a diploma). Minnesota offers a variety of programs aimed at limited English families and individuals.

OHIO

I. Number of at-risk programs with SEA involvement	19
II. Formalized interagency/ intergovernmental collaboration	15 of 19 programs
III. Total non-education funds (in millions)	n/a
IV. Program Descriptions	
1. Students eligible for program	all students to specific populations
2. Population determined by	estimate/census
3. Students receiving this service	percentage varies
4. Ages of students served	3 - 50s
5. Total expenditures (in millions)	$152.73
State	$ 92.28
Local	$ 36.21
Federal	$ 24.24
6. Program required	most optional/ two mandated/ two pilots
7. Program funding methods	most competitive grants/ some unequalized categorical grants
8. Eligible service deliverers	primary local school districts/ some non-public schools and not-for-profit organizations
9. Accountability/effectiveness measures	input/process/performance

The Ohio Department of Education participates in the operation of 19 programs serving the at-risk population from preschool children to adults. The majority of the programs serve the population ages 5-17, although several of the programs serve young adults to age 21 or 22, and the displaced homemakers program serves adults even older than 22. These programs are funded with state, federal and local dollars, which may be understated due to the unavailability of some local expenditure information. Formalized interagency agreements are present in more than 75% of these programs. In most cases, all of the eligible students are not served. The proportion of eligible students receiving services ranges from less than 1% to virtually all with the predominant range being between 25% and 75%. Virtually all of these programs are optional with funding incentives provided and are funded through competitive grants. A large number of these programs are performance-based evaluation methods. Future legislation is expected to increase funding for some of these programs as well as support the provision of some of these services to the homeless. It is possible that legislation will authorize the use of public funds for child care with the Department of Education responsible for developing accompanying standards.

WISCONSIN

I. Number of at-risk programs with SEA involvement	5
II. Formalized interagency/ intergovernmental collaboration	yes
III. Total non-education funds (in millions)	$22.50
State	0.00
Federal	18.00
Local	4.50
Other	0.00
IV. Program Descriptions	
1. Students eligible for program	18,700
2. Population determined by	estimate/enrollment
3. Students receiving this service	10,994
4. Ages of students served	age 3 - grade 12
5. Total expenditures (in millions)	$ 8.40
State	$ 5.40
Local	$ 0.00
Federal	$ 3.00
6. Program required	mandate/optional
7. Program funding methods	general state aid formula/ competitive and non-competitive grants
8. Eligible service deliverers	local school districts/ Head Start grantees
9. Accountability/effectiveness measures	performance

Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction funds 5 distinct programs serving students at risk, four of which serve preschool children. State and federal funds support these programs. Almost 75% of eligible students receive services. Wisconsin requires that all students at risk be identified, that each school district submit a plan for serving this population and that programs for meeting the needs of this population be offered. A wide range of services are provided from a combination of funding sources flowing through the Department of Public Instruction and other state agencies. The educational system has a critical role in establishing a climate for learning. An important part of this climate is to address issues that may put some individuals at risk in the learning process or that may cause barriers to their successful completion of an education program and preparation for a productive, self-supporting life. Some issues include psychological and emotional problems, economic disadvantage, health and physical barriers and other problems.

North Central Region Definitions of "At Risk"

Illinois	Children to be served are those who because of their home and community environment are subject to such language, cultural, economic, and similar disadvantages that they have been determined as a result of screening procedures to be at risk of academic failure.
Indiana	Any student who runs the risk of not acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to become a productive adult is at risk. Therefore, the term "student at risk" refers to any child who has been adversely affected by one, or more, of the factors associated with poor health, economic status, family conditions, linguistic mismatch, social maladjustment, and community change/upheaval. It is the inability to cope with these adversities (whether they be short or long-term) that negatively affects school performance and attendance. Indicators of risk may include: underdeveloped language skills, drug and alcohol abuse, disruptive and/or delinquent behavior, inattentiveness, chronically withdrawn behavior, excessive school absence, dropping out of school, and low academic achievement.
Iowa	Any student identified who is at risk of not: meeting the goals of the educational program established by the district, completing a high school education, or becoming a productive worker. These students **MAY** include, but are not limited to, those identified as: dropouts, potential dropouts, teenage parents, drug users, drug abusers, low academic achievers, abused and homeless children, youth offenders, economically deprived, minorities, culturally deprived (rural isolated), culturally different, those with sudden negative changes in performance due to environmental or physical trauma and those with language barriers, gender barriers and disabilities.
Michigan	The term "children-at-risk" refers to those K-12 pupils whose school achievement, progress toward graduation, or preparation for employment are in serious jeopardy due to one or more of the following: • One or more years behind their grade level in reading or math basic skills achievement (K-8) • Three or more credits behind their age/grade level in credits earned for graduation (9-12) • Chronic truancy or absenteeism • School-age parent • Adjudicated delinquent • Personal or family drug or alcohol abuse • Family trauma such as death, divorce, violence, separation, or unemployment

- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- Ethnically, economically, or linguistically disadvantaged
- Lack of parental support for education or low parental expectations for success

Many children with chronic health problems will find consistent attendance and participation difficult. These children should be considered at risk. The term "children-at-risk" should also bring to mind those children in Head Start and similar programs whose family/economic situation allows them to benefit from such efforts.

Minnesota

The education system has a critical role in establishing a climate for learning. An important part of this climate is to address issues that may put some individuals at risk in the learning process or that may cause barriers to their successful completion of an educational program and preparation for a productive, self-supporting life. Some issues include psychological and emotional problems, economic disadvantage, health and physical barriers, and other problems.

For many programs, Minnesota policymakers have avoided labeling learners who may be at risk or strictly defining program eligibility. "Learners at Risk" frequently suggests a concept that individuals who face barriers to learning need "safety nets" to have their varied needs met in order to benefit from the educational process. It is important NOT to label individuals as being at risk because what puts one person at risk may not put another at risk in the learning process. Furthermore, negative labels are often difficult to outgrow. Efforts should be made to assist individuals to think of themselves from a position of strength rather than a position of vulnerability.

Ohio

At risk children and youth are individuals birth through 21 years of age who are unlikely to complete elementary and secondary school successfully and to acquire skills necessary for higher education and/or employment. Contributing factors may include the following: alcohol/drug abuse, cyclical poverty, delinquency/truancy, family abuse/neglect, family structure, handicapping condition, health condition, inadequate readiness skills/developmental delay, inappropriate instruction, inappropriate school curriculum, inappropriate school placement, limited English/non-English speaking, low self-esteem, and pregnancy.

Singly, any one of these contributing factors is a problem, but collectively they can cause more serious problems as a child progresses.

Wisconsin

"Children at risk" means pupils who are one or more years behind their age or grade level in mathematics or reading skills or in the number of credits attained, and who are or have been one of the following: a school dropout, absent (whether such absences are excused or unexcused) from school in any school semester for more than 15% of the number of hours of direct instruction, adjudicated delinquent, or a parent. The definition also includes pupils in grades 5-8 who either, are behind their age group in basic skills by two or more years or are behind in basic skills one or more years and absent (whether such

absences are excused or unexcused) more than 10% of the number of hours of instruction required during that semester.

Section III - Expert Commentaries

Principles and Problems for Equitable Financing of At-Risk Programs

George A. Chambers

Questions regarding the financing of programs and services for students at risk are numerous and reflect uncertainties that surround any new and developing educational endeavor. Conflicting answers are offered to questions raised. Today's uncertainties are similar to those encountered earlier in the development of the high school, kindergarten, vocational, special, and compensatory education. What are the correct answers to questions posed? Unfortunately, nobody knows. How, then, can local, state, and federal agencies best proceed in this period of development and uncertainty?

This commentary postulates that sound funding approaches can be utilized during this developmental period; experimentation is unnecessary and ill advised. Established thought and principles of school finance exist to provide a sound foundation upon which to proceed and will provide needed focus, reduce failures, and accelerate the successful attainment of predetermined goals.

Prior to establishing a finalized model or subsystem to finance programs and services for students at risk, it is essential that answers be attained for the following fundamental broad policy questions:

1. What should be accomplished?
2. How can it best be done?
3. How much should the programs and services cost?

However, the employment of sound funding principles need not wait for consensus answers to policy questions. Fundamental principles of finance should now start to form the foundation for funding of at-risk students. Those principles are presented in the following paragraphs.

Local, state, and federal agencies should cooperatively address issues and questions posed, as all levels must participate in funding if America is to meet its needs and those of American students. When parameters for at-risk programs and services are established, models can be appropriately refined with regard to "how best to" finance at-risk programs.

Recognition of today's problems of inadequacy and inequity provide a starting point for consideration of problem resolution. While expansion of program services and equitable and increased funding will not guarantee improved results for at-risk students, less than desirable results will occur by maintaining

the status quo. Today, wide variations in financing of programs and student services for at-risk students exist among the seven NCREL states. Those wide variations include: eligible students being served, mean expenditures per pupil, budgeted dollars for eligible students and funding allocations from local, state, and federal sources. A portion of the variations among states result from different definitions and accounting and reporting techniques among the states. Another viable explanation is that new programs, such as programs for at-risk students, must earn their funding and operational priority place among existing and competing educational programs. The priority currently given to at-risk students among the seven NCREL states clearly varies and undoubtedly mirrors the national scene. Reduction of current variations will require concerted efforts by local, state, and federal agencies.

Given the variations observed in funding and students served, it can be concluded that there is a significant and alarming lack of adequacy, equity, efficiency, and liberty among the seven NCREL states. Variations within a state are typically greater than variations among states due to mathematical averaging of state data.

Without federal equalization assistance, there is no chance of equity being achieved among the states. Federal assistance is essential if both equity and adequacy are to be achieved. State and local financing, alone, will not provide sufficient funding to meet at-risk needs without severely detracting from regular student program needs. Substantial federal assistance based on a state's need (wealth and population to be served) is essential.

Each state should, as far as practical, establish finance programs or models to ensure funding adequacy, equity, efficiency, and liberty. State fiscal constraints will necessitate that most states achieve funding adequacy over a time period, say five to ten years, e.g., initial funding at 50% with a 5% to 10% increment each year until 100% of the need is met. State categorical aid to encourage experimentation and to provide demonstration centers for at-risk programs should not detract from general aid. Categorical aid should be limited to a brief time period, three to five years. At the end of a specified time period, categorical aid should be replaced by general aid or terminated in recognition of success or failure, respectively.

Programs devoid of local funding are ultimately destined for underfunding, inefficiency, and ineffectiveness. Local funding provides essential fiscal stability, increased citizenry, board and school personnel support along with enhanced concern for accountability and effectiveness. With local district participation in funding, the state must ensure through a finance model that each district exerts effort in relationship to its needs and fiscal ability. States should encourage local districts to exceed predetermined levels of minimal adequacy through additional funding (leeway). Leeway is desirable and can be enhanced by a state matching incentive program that recognizes local district fiscal ability.

Varying levels of funding needs exist for varying levels of students at risk. These variations must be considered when determining fiscal needs of local districts. Student weighting is an essential procedure to ensure funding equity and to more accurately determine adequacy. Failure to recognize student and district differences through weighting will perpetuate inadequacy, inefficiency,

and ineffectiveness among many districts.

Independence in local district programming and budgeting location is essential for both short and long term efficiency and effectiveness. State oversight should be restricted to ensuring that monies have been expended as allocated. Local districts should establish measurable program goals for each at-risk program, select among alternative program plans with cost estimates, then operationalize and monitor individual programs on a scheduled basis. Programs not meeting goals should be modified or abandoned. Inefficient and ineffective programs should not be permitted.

During the ensuing years of development, concentrated efforts will be required to achieve the goals of adequacy, equity, efficiency, effectiveness, and independence. Ultimately, a local-state-federal funding partnership must be developed. Phased funding on a planned basis should be employed until programs are adequately funded. Equity will require recognizing student and district differences through student weighting. Local independence and leeway should be encouraged. Ideas advanced here can be achieved within a ten-year period. A major risk for America is to continue its current inadequate, inequitable, inefficient, and ineffective funding for students at risk. America cannot afford that risk. While American students remain at risk, so does America.

Equitable and Effective Funding for At-Risk Children and Youth

James G. Cibulka

Any discussion of this topic must confront two distressing realities. Many youngsters who are labeled "at risk" are presently afforded inferior educational opportunities due to inadequate funding. At the same time, the school districts where they attend school, were they to receive adequate resources, would not necessarily spend the money effectively to maximize these students' human potential.

This message is unlikely to be received with open arms by most audiences. Despite the plethora of state initiatives for at-risk youth, it is not pleasant to admit that basic state and local funding systems may be failing these youth and that the inadequacies of these funding systems cannot be papered over with special initiatives that hardly compensate for inadequate funding bases. At the other side, local officials are accustomed to saying that they know best what at-risk students need, not state and federal bureaucrats. Yet, the record of their achievements is not particularly impressive in this regard. Additional resources for at-risk youth are sometimes squandered on ill-conceived programs or dissipated within the existing delivery system, with little positive educational impact. Clearly, at a national level we are not addressing the problem effectively. Just one indicator is the stalled graduation rate. Indeed, according to figures released by the Secretary of Education in April, 1990, the graduation rate actually declined slightly in 1988-89, continuing to hover around 70 percent.

What is to be done about this situation? Some combination of the ingredients listed below appear to have the highest potential for turning around the high

failure and drop-out rates for at-risk youth.

A New Social Compact

We need more governors, state superintendents, mayors, and local superintendents to underscore the urgency of this problem. There must be a major commitment to addressing the problem, and it must be shared among all the stakeholders—elected officials, community and civic leaders, administrators, teachers, and parents. Unless everyone's attention is refocused, the necessary commitment and energy will not be there. The massiveness of the problem requires more than narrow, technical organizational responses, for school officials acting in isolation are either unable or unwilling to address the full scope of the at-risk problem.

New Collaborative Roles

Suzanne Juday appropriately argues for this approach. State, federal, and local resources, both public and private, need to be leveraged at the margins to fostering new collaborative roles that will shape this social compact. It is likely to have several manifestations:

Cooperation Among Service-Providers

As mentioned by Juday, the lack of coordination among social welfare, justice, health, housing, school, and other officials is a major obstacle to helping at-risk youth. Michael Kirst at Stanford University concluded from a study of youth services in California that we really have a non-system. Resources are not effectively targeted because of narrow program jurisdictions, contradictory regulations, legal limitations on sharing of information, and a host of related problems. Consequently, at-risk youth are unevenly and poorly served much too frequently by this fragmented, patchwork system of social services.

Cooperative Roles With Parents

In the 1990s we appear to be relearning what successful parent-involvement programs in the 1960s told us: Many parents of at-risk youth are eager to help. The current fashion is to refer to a growing "underclass" in our society and to the disorganization and decay of families. While only a Dr. Pangloss could ignore that societal problems have increased sharply in the last 25 years, it is easy to fall into a "cultural deficiency" trap and assume that poor parents as a group are unwilling or unable to help the school. Moreover, they can serve as a source of assistance for those youth whose families are truly dysfunctional. The early findings about the favorable impact of parent involvement on student achievements in such programs as Missouri's Parents as Teachers Program should encourage educators to reexamine ways to forge closer links with families.

New Ties With the World of Work

Employers provide a valuable resource, and many efforts already are underway. Given the prospect of ever increasing labor shortages, however, there will be more incentives than ever for businesses to rethink ways of supporting schools to address their manpower and human resource development needs.

School Restructuring

We have come to the point of recognizing that incremental changes in schools have the least potential for making a positive impact in reducing the drop out rate and improving the performance of at-risk youth. Effective changes

ordinarily are multifaceted and touch many aspects of school philosophy and operations simultaneously. At the same time, what this restructuring should look like precisely is unclear. There is likely to be more than one model for effectively working with at-risk youth, depending on age, student personality and ability, community context, and other factors. Indeed, the concept of "at-risk" is a wide net that can embrace quite diverse student characteristics. We do know that smaller schools with clear, shared goals, nurturant student-teacher relations, as well as strong academic expectations and support have relatively greater success with some at-risk youth. It may be that the most successful approaches with at-risk youth will be to restructure the entire school as it affects all children, not just those at-risk. There is a desperate need for further experimentation to increase our confidence in what we know about successful approaches. As Juday indicates, this will require allocation of resources to evaluation. Many urban school systems have myriad programs for at-risk youth that never have been evaluated carefully. Also, experimentation will require additional funds.

Funding Strategies

Since we know only a modest amount at this point about how to educate at-risk youth successfully, we ought to use resources to create the maximum incentives for experimentation and dissemination. Traditional funding approaches such as mandates in the absence of strong incentives to experiment or payoff for success, are not likely to be successful. These approaches typically are too narrow and too prescriptive. State and federal resources can be most effective by supporting model programs, testing them, and helping school systems disseminate findings to one another. Education as a policy field spends deplorably meager resources on research and development, compared with defense, health, and other policy arenas. Moreover, what we spend has been dominated by top-down models of innovation rather than a decentralized R&D model. State and federal officials, and even local officials, can recognize improved performance and offer monetary incentives to schools that lower dropout rates. Further, such experimentation is likely to have the greatest appeal where it is tied to broad restructuring goals.

We should not lose sight of finance equalization goals, to be sure. Yet equalization of inter-district funding is not a sufficient strategy for addressing program and outcome improvements because it is too blunt a policy instrument for altering organizational behavior. Equalization is best viewed as a parallel path, providing a necessary foundation over the long term for improved schooling. To change organizational behavior, however, we must target resources on changing incentive systems in schools, encourage experimentation, and improving the knowledge base from which educators work. In this sense, the at-risk problem is just one dimension of the larger problem of how to reform American schools in fundamental ways. It is highly probable that considerable infusions of additional revenues will be needed to accomplish this large-scale reform for at least the next decade. Realistically, there is no guarantee that these monies will appear. Thus, educators must be prepared to commit scarce resources at the margins to test improved programs for at-risk youth. Otherwise, the future is likely to be no more than an extension of the recent past—increased expenditures with little evidence of improved performance.

Fiscal Issues Relating to Services for At-Risk Students in the Midwest

James Gordon Ward

Introduction

This commentary provides a reaction and brief discussion of the issues presented in the NCREL study of funding services for at-risk children in the seven Midwest states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. Five specific topics will be addressed:

1. Program adequacy
2. Program accountability and legitimacy
3. Systemic approach to services for at-risk children
4. Equalization of funding
5. Social justice and equality of educational opportunities

Program Adequacy

A notable feature of the state programs for at-risk students in the Midwest is that in all seven states in the study, not all eligible students are being served. For those states that provided estimates of eligible children and children served, the percentage of eligible children served by the various programs ranged from a low of 24.3% to a high of almost 72%. Only two states indicate that the percentage varies by category.

However, per-pupil state funding for children served presents a different picture. State dollars per at-risk child served vary from a high of $403 in one state to a low of $57 in another. Lack of specificity in program information and variations in how states reported these data make interpretation difficult, but they do suggest two major conclusions that can be drawn from the information on program adequacy. These conclusions are:

1. There are serious questions about whether current programs are adequate to meet the full range of needs and demands of children at risk of academic failure in the Midwest states.
2. Variations in funding from state to state would indicate that adequacy levels in some states are less sufficient than they are in others.

Program Accountability and Legitimacy

The state data would suggest that the level of performance assessment and program accountability is less than optimal. There are few indications that a systematic effort is being made to ensure that the programs for at-risk children are reaching all eligible children and that the programs that are in place are achieving desired results. The Chicago Federal Reserve Bank's April 1990 report on the Midwest economy shows that once again the region's economic performance is lagging behind the rest of the nation and this will result in tightening state and local government revenues. As the competition for public revenues becomes more intense, the necessity of establishing program legitimacy through appropriate assessment and accountability measures will increase. If these issues are not properly addressed, funding for at-risk programs will increasingly be vulnerable to budget cutbacks.

Systemic Approach to Services for At-Risk Children

Formalized interagency/intergovernmental collaboration on services for at-risk children has been identified nationally as a critical issue in at-risk programs. At-risk children require and are eligible for a broad array of social services provided by many public and not-for-profit agencies in addition to the public schools. Unless there is a systemic approach to such services involving a high degree of cooperation among government agencies, many children will go underserved and resources will be wasted through overlapping programs and inadequate services. Some commentators have even suggested that the lack of congruity between school district boundaries and the boundaries of other service providers, such as counties and cities, will hamper delivery of children's services.

Equalization of Funding

Many states fund services for at-risk children through categorical state aid programs that are not equalized. That is to say, local school district ability to pay is not taken into account in the funding formula. As a result, if the program is not fully state funded, the provision of services for at-risk children place a heavier burden on low fiscal ability school districts. This creates inequality in funding and increases the tendency of poorer school districts to underfund such programs. Illinois provides an excellent example of this practice. Most categorical funds for at-risk children in Illinois are not equalized based on the fiscal ability of the school district providing direct services. Other states in the region have similar systems. A far superior approach is a weighted pupil count for at risk and special needs children that integrates the funding of services for such children into the general state grant-in-aid formula that is generally equalized based on ability to support local services.

Social Justice and Equality of Educational Opportunities

Political theorist Amy Gutman, in her Democratic Education (Princeton University Press, 1987), argues that one of the tenets of education in a democracy is non-discrimination that requires all children be taught according to their educational needs and abilities and not in accordance with their race, class or religion. We know that the distribution of children at risk of educational failure in our society is not even in respect to class or race. Therefore, to underserve or underfund at-risk programs is per se discriminatory. Social justice in a democratic society requires that at-risk populations be properly served according to their needs, even if that requires additional resources over and above what other children receive. The lack of sufficient attention to at-risk children in the states in the Midwest comprises a form of discrimination based both on class and race that is far subtler than more overt forms of racial segregation, but its effect is no less pernicious. We have not yet addressed the moral imperative of social justice and equality of educational opportunity in our public schools in the Midwest.